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*Increasing Your Odds**

a guide to
applying and
interviewing
for Federal jobs

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d from *Marketing Yourself (or) From Ruts...to Raises*,
LM Integrated Workforce Committee, June 1989.

Introduction

Now that you've made the decision to apply for a new Federal position, you want to do your best to develop a winning application. The three greatest hurdles in the application process are preparing an application; writing a narrative statement addressing your knowledge, skills, and

abilities (KSAs); and interviewing. This pamphlet provides hints on how to tailor your application to a particular vacancy announcement and on how to put your best foot forward in a personal interview. It also includes other references for additional information or more detail.

•
There are three kinds of people in the world—the wills, the won'ts, and the can'ts. The first accomplish everything; the second oppose everything; the third fail in everything.
•

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How to Prepare Your Application for Specific Vacancies

In the past, Standard Form 171 (SF 171), Application for Federal Employment, was used throughout the Federal Government to apply for jobs. But in January 1995, the Federal Government issued a much simpler application, Optional Form 612 (OF 612), Optional Application for Federal Employment. DOI is moving away from accepting SF171s and eventually will no longer accept them from internal candidates. Generally, candidates may use the OF 612, a resume, or other written format to apply for a position. Some vacancies may require you to submit a supplemental

questionnaire. The vacancy announcement will specify which form is required to apply.

Regardless of the type of application used, you should take advantage of the opportunity it provides to sell yourself as the right person for the job. Your application introduces a personnel specialist and selecting official to your experience and education, skills training, outside activities, awards, etc., and ultimately influences their determinations. Therefore, it is essential that you submit an application that reflects careful preparation.

•
**The kind of people
I look for
to fill top
management
spots are the
eager beavers,
the mavericks.
These are the
people who try
to do more than
they're expected
to do—they
always reach.**

- Lee Iacocca
•

It is best to prepare your application or resume in a way that reflects your background as it applies to the advertised position. The vacancy announcement will usually list major duties of the position and the evaluation factors. When you prepare your application, complete all items on the form as thoroughly as possible—do not assume that someone else will understand what is not there. If you plan to submit a resume, be sure you provide all required information as outlined in the brochure *Applying for a Federal Job* (OF 510). In addition to your work experience, other elements, such as relevant awards, training, self-development, outside activities, and supervisory appraisal are evaluated as indicators of your ability to perform the specific ranking factors of the position.

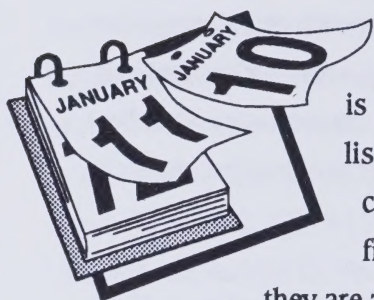
It is important to be concise in describing your experience. However, be specific enough so that the person reviewing the application can easily identify your knowledge, skills, abilities, responsibilities, and interests. Take the time to note:

- What you do.
- What skills you use to do the work.
- What your specific responsibilities are. You should always describe your duties and responsibilities as you perform them and in your own words. Never attach copies of position descriptions. While you will find your official position descriptions useful when preparing your ap-



plication, a selecting official will seldom read attachments of this sort.

- How you use your own judgment and initiative in the position. Show accomplishments such as special assignments, details, task forces, and especially supervisory/managerial experiences.



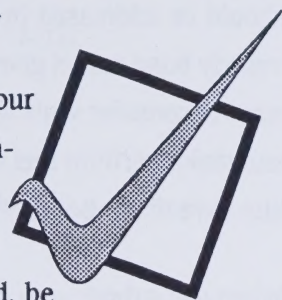
If you need more space to document your specific work experience than is provided, use plain bond paper and list your work experience in reverse chronological order. Avoid lengthy or fragmented attachments and be sure they are also in chronological order.

When preparing a Federal resume, use white space to highlight the text and make it easier to read. Limit your resume (including experience, awards, education, and training) to five pages. And be sure to print your resume on quality white or gray bond; colors can be distracting. Refer to the two examples at the end of this section for help in writing your own resume.

You are no longer required to describe all work experience in the last 10 years. You need only describe job-related work/volunteer experience, regardless of the time frame. You may wish to briefly describe other, unrelated experience if you believe such a description is of value.

If you have employment in two instances covering the same time periods, be sure to indicate how they fit in, i.e., “part-time” work while employed as ____ from (date) to (date).

Do not overlook opportunities to document your outside activities, education, awards, and training, especially if they are relevant to the position for which you are applying. If a transcript or listing of college courses is required, be sure to attach it to your application.

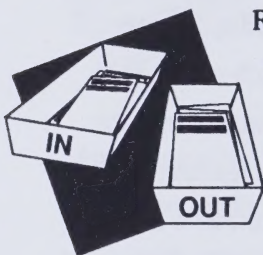


Once you have completed your application or resume, you may want to have someone review it for a critical analysis of grammar, sentence structure, and overall continuity. In addition, be sure to make any necessary modifications and updates, such as the kind of position for which you are applying, vacancy announcement number, and the lowest grade you will accept. Be flexible here, and explain when it may be appropriate for you to consider a lower grade. And if you make additional copies of your application, the appearance should be as good as the original. Sign the copy with an original signature.

It may be pertinent to include a cover sheet with your application to briefly explain why you feel you are well qualified for the position and how you meet any selective placement factors or ranking factors. This cover sheet may also include any other specific information you wish to share.

Supervisory appraisals are another important part of your application package. Give your supervisor suggestions about what should be addressed in the appraisal. If your supervisor is extremely busy or has given inadequate appraisals before, you may want to consider writing your own. Give your supervisor a copy and make her/him feel as though you're only trying to help her/him save time. Be careful not to offend your supervisor.

When you submit your application, it is important to keep a record of the vacancies for which you have applied and the telephone number where you will be able to obtain information about your application if necessary.



Remember, personnel specialists and selecting officials must rely on how well you present your personal qualifications on your application and cannot make assumptions regarding your knowledge, skills, abilities, etc.

The following eight pages show two suggested resume formats, as well as a sample of a completed OF 612. Note that the same data is used in all three examples to make it easier to compare them.

JOHN Q. DOE
SSN:000-00-0000

1234 Cherry Lane
Denver, CO 80212
Daytime: (303) 236-0000 Evening: (303) 111-1111

OBJECTIVE

Wildlife Biologist, GS-486-11
Announcement BLM-95-22222

WORK EXPERIENCE

Wildlife Biologist, GS-486-9 12/92 to Present

Salary: \$29,641 per year; Hours per week: 40
Bureau of Land Management, Colorado State Office,
2850 Youngfield St, Lakewood, CO 80225-0047
Ms. Mary Smith, (303) 236-0000 Permission to Contact Granted

Duties and Accomplishments:

Develop and implement procedures for integrating the Integrated Habitat Inventory and Classification System (IHICS) wildlife inventories with vegetative inventories. Devise new or modify current data collection procedures. Educate data systems users on proper data collection techniques.

Accomplishments have included design of an edit/error system to correct raw field data and generate error listings and design of an IHICS integration system to generate standard reports.

Wildlife Biologist, GS-486-7, 10/91 to 12/92

Salary: \$25,745 per year; Hours per week: 40
Bureau of Land Management, Redding Resource Area, 355 Hemsted Dr, Redding, CA 96002
Mr. Richard Jones, (555) 555-5555

Duties and Accomplishments:

Determined condition (rating) and trend of habitat sites. Verified and/or predicted animal species occurrence, density, relative abundance and distribution within selected habitat sites. Delineated big game crucial areas and estimated their carrying capacities.

Accomplishments included analysis of herpetological inventory data, which required the use of various statistical techniques, and analysis of Raptor and Small Bird Inventory.

Biological Technician, GS-404-5, 8/90 to 10/91

Salary: \$23,839 per year; Hours per week: 40
Bureau of Land Management, Redding Resource Area, 355 Hemsted Dr, Redding, CA 96002
Mr. Richard Jones, (555) 555-5555

Duties and Accomplishments:

Collected habitat site data. Identified special habitat features. Assisted in delineating possible critical habitats of threatened or endangered species and crucial habitats of sensitive species.

Accomplishments included collecting aquatic inventory data, analyzing aquatic inventory data, and training co-workers how to use statistical analysis computer programs.

Prior to 8/90, held a number of temporary positions to finance college education.

EDUCATION

Colleges and Universities: California State University,
Sacramento, CA 95825
Bachelor of Science in Biology
August, 1990

Last High School: Sacramento Union High School
Sacramento, CA
Graduated June, 1986

AWARDS

Special Act Award January 1993
Performance Award October 1995

PERSONAL INFORMATION

U.S. Citizen
No Veteran's Preference
Highest Federal Employment: GS-401-9 12/92 to Present
Reinstatement Eligibility: Current Federal Employee

TRAINING COURSES

PC/Focus Advanced Techniques 1992
Basic Program Management 1995

CERTIFICATION

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, all of the information on and attached to this resume is true, correct, complete and made in good faith. I understand that false or fraudulent information or attached to this resume may be grounds for not hiring me or for firing me after I begin work, and may be punishable by fine or imprisonment. I understand that any information I give may be investigated.

Signature: _____ Date Signed: _____

JOHN Q. DOE
1234 Cherry Lane
Denver, CO 80212
(303) 111-1111

CAREER OBJECTIVE

Wildlife Biologist, GS-486-11
Announcement BLM-95-22222

CAREER SUMMARY

Bureau of Land Management Wildlife Biologist with four years of experience at the field and state office levels.

EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

**12/92-Present Bureau of Land Management, Colorado State Office
Wildlife Biologist, GS-486-9**

Develop and implement procedures for integrating the Integrated Habitat Inventory and Classification System (IHICS) wildlife inventories with vegetative inventories. Devise new or modify current data collection procedures. Educate data systems users on proper data collection techniques.

Accomplishments have included design of an edit/error system to correct raw field data and generate error listings and design of an IHICS integration system to generate standard reports.

**10/91-12/92 Bureau of Land Management, Redding Resource Area
Wildlife Biologist**

Determined condition (rating) and trend of habitat sites. Verified and/or predicted animal species occurrence, density, relative abundance and distribution within selected habitat sites. Delineated big game crucial areas and estimated their carrying capacities.

Accomplishments included analysis of herpetological inventory data, which required the use of various statistical techniques, and analysis of Raptor and Small Bird Inventory.

**8/90-10/91 Bureau of Land Management, Redding Resource Area
Biological Technician, GS-404-5**

Collected habitat site data. Identified special habitat features. Assisted in delineating possible critical habitats of threatened or endangered species and crucial habitats of sensitive species.

Accomplishments included collecting aquatic inventory data, analyzing aquatic inventory data, and training co-workers how to use statistical analysis computer programs.

Prior to 8/90, held a number of temporary positions to finance college education.

EDUCATION

Bachelor of Science in Biology awarded August 1990, California State University,
Sacramento, CA 95825.

Graduated June 1986, Sacramento Union High School,
Sacramento, CA.

AWARDS

Special Act Award, January 1993

Performance Award, October 1995

TRAINING COURSES

PC/Focus Advanced Techniques	1992
Basic Program Management	1995

John Q. Doe

SSN:000-00-0000

Daytime: (303) 236-0000

Evening: (303) 111-1111

Non-veteran, US Citizen

Highest Federal Employment: GS-401-9 12/92 to Present

Reinstatement Eligibility: Current Federal Employee

12/92-Present **Wildlife Biologist, GS-486-9**
Bureau of Land Management
Colorado State Office
2850 Youngfield St
Lakewood, CO 80225-0047
Supervisor: Ms. Mary Smith, (303) 236-0000
Permission to Contact Granted
Salary: \$29,641 per year; Hours per week: 40

10/91-12/92 **Wildlife Biologist, GS-486-7**
Bureau of Land Management
Redding Resource Area
355 Hemsted Dr
Redding, CA 96002
Supervisor: Mr. Richard Jones, (555) 555-5555
Salary: \$25,745 per year; Hours per week: 40

8/90-10/91 **Biological Technician, GS-404-5**
Bureau of Land Management
Redding Resource Area (same as above)
Mr. Richard Jones, (555) 555-5555
Salary: \$23,839 per year; Hours per week: 40

Certification

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, all of the information on and attached to this resume is true, correct, complete and made in good faith. I understand that false or fraudulent information or attached to this resume may be grounds for not hiring me or for firing me after I begin work, and may be punishable by fine or imprisonment. I understand that any information I give may be investigated.

Signature: _____ Date Signed: _____

OPTIONAL APPLICATION FOR FEDERAL EMPLOYMENT - OF 612

You may apply for most jobs with a resume, this form, or other written format. If your resume or application does not provide all the information requested on this form and in the job vacancy announcement, you may lose consideration for a job.

1 Job title in announcement Wildlife Biologist	2 Grade(s) applying for GS-11	3 Announcement number BLM-95-22222
4 Last name Doe	First and middle names John Quincy	5 Social Security Number 000-00-0000
6 Mailing address 1234 Cherry Lane City Denver	State CO	7 Phone numbers (include area code) Daytime (303) 236-0000 Evening (303) 411-1111
	ZIP Code 80212	

WORK EXPERIENCE

8 Describe your paid and nonpaid work experience related to the job for which you are applying. Do not attach job descriptions.

1) Job title (if Federal, include series and grade) Wildlife Biologist, GS-486-9			
From (year) 12/92	To (year) present	Salary \$ 29,641	per annum
Hours per week 40		Employer's name and address Bureau of Land Management, Colorado State Office 2850 Youngfield St. Lakewood, CO 80225-0047	
		Supervisor's name and phone number Mary Smith (303) 236-0000	
Describe your duties and accomplishments			

Develop and implement procedures for integrating the integrated Habitat Inventory and Classification System (IHICS) wildlife inventories with vegetative inventories. Devise new or modify current data collection procedures. Educate data systems users on proper data collection techniques.

Accomplishments have included design of an edit/error system to correct raw field data and generate error listings and design of an IHICS integration system to generate standard reports.

2) Job title (if Federal, include series and grade) Wildlife Biologist, GS-486-7			
From (year) 10/91	To (year) 12/92	Salary \$ 25,745	per annum
Hours per week 40		Employer's name and address Bureau of Land Management, Redding Resource Area 355 Hemsted Dr. Redding, CA 96002	
		Supervisor's name and phone number Richard Jones (555) 555-5555	
Describe your duties and accomplishments			

Determined condition (rating) and trend of habitat sites. Verified and/or predicted animal species occurrence, density, relative abundance and distribution within selected habitat sites. Delineated big game crucial areas and estimated their carrying capacities.

Accomplishments included analysis of herpetological inventory data, which required the use of various statistical techniques, and analysis of Raptor and Small Bird Inventory.

9 May we contact your current supervisor?

YES ☒ NO ☐ If we need to contact your current supervisor before making an offer, we will contact you first.

EDUCATION

10 Mark highest level completed. Some HS ☐ HS/GED ☐ Associate ☐ Bachelor ☒ Master ☐ Doctoral ☐

11 Last high school (HS) or GED school. Give the school's name, city, State, ZIP Code (if known), and year diploma or GED received.

Sacramento Union High School, Sacramento, CA 6/86

12 Colleges and universities attended. Do not attach a copy of your transcript unless requested.

Name	Total Credits Earned	Major(s)	Degree - Year (if any) Received
1) California State University	Semester Quarter		
City State ZIP Code			
Sacramento CA 95825	124	Biology	BS 1990
2)			
3)			

OTHER QUALIFICATIONS

13 Job-related training courses (give title and year). Job-related skills (other languages, computer software/hardware, tools, machinery, typing speed, etc.). Job-related certificates and licenses (current only). Job-related honors, awards, and special accomplishments (publications, memberships in professional/scholar societies, leadership activities, public speaking, and performance awards). Give dates, but do not send documents unless requested.

TRAINING COURSES:

PC/Focus Advanced Techniques 1992
Basic Program Management 1995

AWARDS:

Special Act Award January 1993
Performance Award October 1995

GENERAL

14 Are you a U.S. citizen? YES ☒ NO ☐ Give the country of your citizenship.

15 Do you claim veterans' preference? NO ☒ YES ☐ Mark your claim of 5 or 10 points below.

5 points ☐ Attach your DD 214 or other proof. 10 points ☐ Attach an Application for 10-Point Veterans' Preference (SF 15) and proof required.

16 Were you ever a Federal civilian employee?

NO ☐ YES ☒ For highest civilian grade give:

Series	Grade	From (year)	To (year)
486	9	12/92	present

17 Are you eligible for reinstatement based on career or career-conditional Federal status?

NO ☐ YES ☒ If requested, attach SF 50 proof.

APPLICANT CERTIFICATION

18 I certify that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, all of the information on and attached to this application is true, correct, complete and made in good faith. I understand that false or fraudulent information on or attached to this application may be grounds for not hiring me or for firing me after I begin work, and may be punishable by fine or imprisonment. I understand that any information I give may be investigated.

SIGNATURE

DATE SIGNED

ADDENDUM

John Quincy Doe, SSN: 000-00-0000

Biological Technician, GS-404-5

8/90 to 10/91, Salary: \$23,839 per year, Hours per week: 40

Bureau of Land Management

Redding Resource Area

355 Hemsted Dr

Redding, CA 96002

Mr. Richard Jones, (555) 555-5555

Duties and Accomplishments:

Collected habitat site data. Identified special habitat features. Assisted in delineating possible critical habitats of threatened or endangered species and crucial habitats of sensitive species.

Accomplishments included collecting aquatic inventory data, analyzing aquatic inventory data, and training co-workers how to use statistical analysis computer programs.

Prior to 8/90, held a number of temporary positions to finance college education.

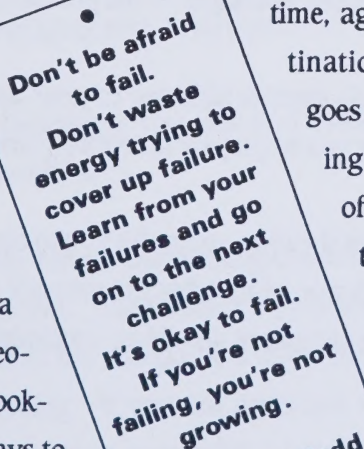
KSAs: The Beauty & the Beast

What are KSAs?

KSAs can be simply defined as: knowledge—something you know; ability—something you can do; and skill—how well you do it. KSAs are written to identify one simple or readily identifiable characteristic.

No, KSAs were not developed by a sadistic person with nothing better to do than look forward to retirement. The KSA process was actually developed by a group of sane people who were looking for better ways to rate and evaluate job candidates.

When contemplating responses to KSAs, keep in mind that they offer you the opportunity to “sell yourself” to the selecting official. The better you portray yourself, the better your opportunity to be selected. Face it, there are a lot of exceptionally qualified candidates in the job market, all waiting to advance or even make a lateral move.

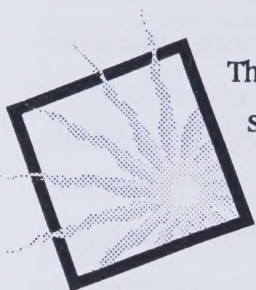


•
**Don't be afraid
to fail.
Don't waste
energy trying to
cover up failure.
Learn from your
failures and go
on to the next
challenge.
It's okay to fail.
If you're not
failing, you're not
growing.**

- H. Stanley Judd
•

The beast of the KSA is the time, agony, and procrastination that generally goes along with providing detailed evidence of your experience, training, education, awards, hobbies, self-development efforts, and other aspects of your background as they

relate to the KSAs. Frequently, KSAs are nonspecific and appear impersonal, abstract, and repetitive of information requested on the application.



The beauty, on the other hand, is that KSA responses give you the opportunity to specifically address the items the selecting official feels are the most important. They also give you the chance to show how well you express yourself in writing. Oh, and one more thing—they encourage brevity. Two pages are all you get to sell your attributes. Generally, if you do a good job, you will seldom need additional space.

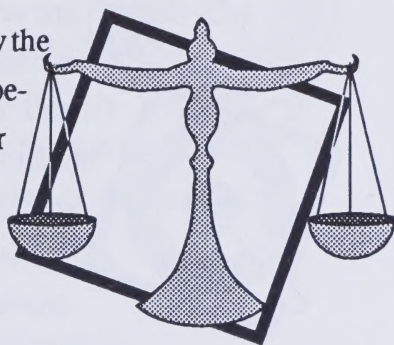
A narrative statement addressing KSAs does three things for you as an applicant:

- It presents an original writing sample that is guaranteed to be read and evaluated by the prospective hiring agency.
- It adds job-specific tailoring to your application without requiring you to prepare an entirely new application.
- It presents the opportunity for you to convince others that your background matches the vacancy requirement. The narrative statement should be considered a written interview.

How KSAs are Used

When your application reaches the servicing personnel office, it is rated against the standards in the Qualifications Handbook. If your application meets the qualification standards, it may be rated against the KSAs using a rating plan.

A rating plan is developed jointly by the selecting official and a personnel specialist and is used as a guide for ranking eligible candidates. The rating plan defines a “superior” and “acceptable” competence level for each KSA.

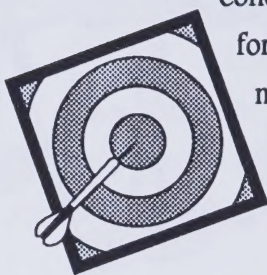


You do not have access to the rating plan during the preparation of your application. However, extra time spent fine-tuning your KSAs could make the difference between “acceptable” and “superior,” significantly increasing your total score.

Here are a few techniques you may find useful in preparing your responses to the KSAs:

- Carefully review the ranking factors of the vacancy announcement. Ask yourself if your background meets all or most of the criteria; if it does, then you are ready to start writing. If you are uncertain whether your background matches, meet with a supervisor or other person who can help you make that determination.

- List examples of your experience that demonstrate your capabilities for each of the KSAs. It may help you to set the list aside for a day or two to allow your memory to work.
- Write a short description of your related experience for each element; one or two paragraphs is the general rule.



Concentrate on developing a concise summary for each element. Remember that your submission/summary will be judged as a writing sample. Sell yourself!!! Develop the statement as though it were an oral answer to an interview question.

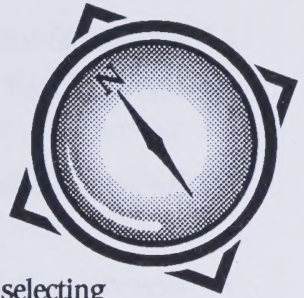
- Set up an appealing format. Be sure that your statement is typed, your thoughts flow well, and there is a natural progression from one statement to the next. Normally, repeating the ranking factor just as it was stated on the announcement is recommended. If limited to a specific number of pages, avoid crowding of information to squeeze in more information.
- Transmit the original narrative along with your application. The original copy gives the impression that you did special work on your application package for the specific job opportunity.
- Maintain and build upon your narrative statement file. Often related (generic) KSAs are required for common oc-

cupational areas. The more a KSA statement is rewritten, the better it becomes.

A Few Dos and Don'ts for KSAs

Do:

- Read the whole announcement carefully. Focus on duties and responsibilities of the job. Phone the selecting official for additional information or for clarification regarding duties.
- Follow the agency's specific instructions.
- Provide specific examples of your experience and the level of your involvement.
- Repeat work descriptions from your application.
- Write "I" statements in clear, concise language.
- Focus on progress, achievements, and recognition.
- Use professional jargon, acronyms, and technical terminology as appropriate.



Don't:

- Exaggerate or fabricate.
- Ramble into unrelated areas or attempt to bluff.
- Cut and paste work descriptions from your application.
- Neglect to prepare a KSA response.
- Send "old" narratives to all related jobs.



KSAs are an important part of your application package. Don't neglect them or expect personnel specialists and selecting officials to interpret them. Be clear, concise, and honest. When you have written your response, get someone to read it and give you an honest assessment.

Always remember, **market yourself**. No one else will!

Interviews

No matter how well you present yourself through your application or your KSA responses, the interview is the final hurdle and the most important part of the selection process. It is your last chance to convey what you can bring to the position you're applying for. The interview is when the employer makes that final assessment of your personal characteristics and decides whether you will fit in with the organization.

Preparing for the Interview

- Know and believe in your goals and objectives.

- Know and understand your strengths and weaknesses; be honest with yourself and with the interviewer.
- Find out as much as you can about the interviewer, the position for which you are applying, and the unwritten tasks. Just because it is advertised as a Range Conservationist position doesn't mean you won't be doing some land use planning or forestry work.

All things being equal, you may have other skills that would help separate you from the other candidates. Obtaining information prior to the in-

•
(You)
should think
in terms of
competing
only with
(yourself)...
as in golf,
where what
it's all about
is to better
yourself.

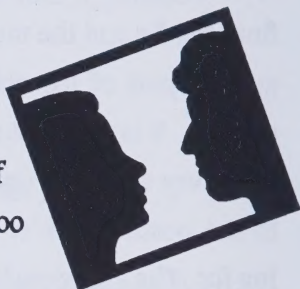
•
- Polly Bergen

interview can also help you relate yourself and your experience to the written and unwritten needs of the job.

- Write down *all* of your experience—don't limit yourself to paying jobs; many volunteer or hobby activities may have provided you with valuable experience.

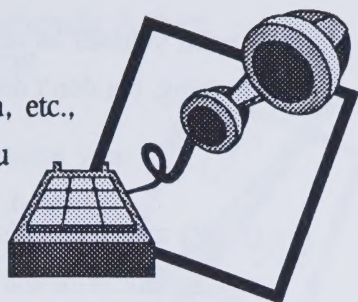
Person-to-Person Interviewing

- Dress properly for the interview—find out what employees wear and tailor yourself to the situation. If you're not sure, it's better to look too professional than too casual.
- Prepare yourself to deal with the nervousness you'll feel when you get to the interview. The nervous feelings you get are nothing more than an overload of adrenaline, so it's best to use some of it up with physical movement. Obviously the physical movement must be something that can be done without making a mess of yourself before the interview. Try some isometric exercises in the car or in the restroom just prior to the interview.
- Arrive early—being late will hurt your prospects with the interviewer.
- Bring any documentation of your accomplishments with you. Don't bring the entire file, only the essential elements.



Telephone Interviewing

- Have your notes, application, etc., ready at all times in case you receive a telephone call for your interview (which is common).

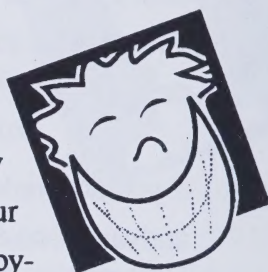


- Don't hesitate to ask if you can call the interviewer right back if the area where you work is noisy and distracting. Then get to a quiet area and call back at the agreed-upon time.
- If you are working on a project with a specific deadline and cannot take the time for the interview, it's okay to ask to return the call or set up another time. Be sure to explain your reason for making the return call and agree on a specific time/date. Then be ready!

During the Interview

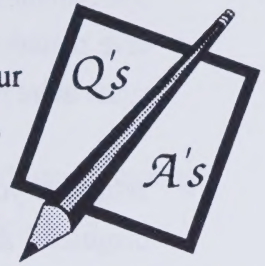
- Listen carefully to the questions and keep your replies on target—be precise.
- Observe proper etiquette: (1) if the interview is in person, don't smoke, eat, or drink even if invited to do so; (2) ask the interviewer how he/she prefers to be addressed; (3) never interrupt the interviewer; and (4) wait for the interviewer to sit down or offer you a chair before you sit.

- Present yourself as an honest person—don't try to hide anything, but don't deliberately reveal any shortcomings either.
- Qualify and distinguish yourself in the interview: relate your specific skills and experience to the position for which you are applying. Bring out your unique characteristics and experiences and relate them to the position in order to distinguish yourself.
- Sell yourself—project enthusiasm for the job without sounding too ingratiating (don't grovel). Make only positive remarks about yourself, your experience, and your previous employer (don't sell yourself short).
- Ask for the job; tell the interviewer that you are really interested in working for him/her and want the job.
- Try to get a firm idea of what the next step will be before the interview ends.
- If you're sure that the job is not for you because of a factor such as location, salary, or chance for advancement, it is often best to say so directly during the interview.



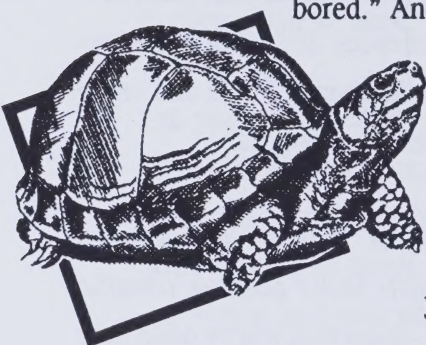
Responding to the Most Commonly Asked Questions During an Interview

- **Tell me about yourself:** Outline your strong points and accomplishments, make a summary statement, and then stop talking.
- **What qualifies you for this job?:** Relate your most positive qualifications and experiences first. Again, be prepared with your success stories ahead of time and relate them as if they were spontaneous thoughts.
- **Why do you want this job...or...why do you want to work for this organization?:** Make positive remarks about the work of the office—show that you've done your homework—display your knowledge subtly.
- **What are your goals—long-term or short-term?:** Be careful not to appear arrogant. Instead, phrase your reply along the lines of, "I'd like to get experience in these areas and I hope to gain increased responsibilities and perhaps become a...or have a position like yours someday." Be careful of motherhood and apple pie statements.
- **Why do you want to leave your present job?:** Never say anything negative about your present employer or the organization/agency—even if it's true. Don't mention money; if that sounds like your only motivation, the in-



interviewer will find someone who's interested in the responsibilities of the position. The best bet is to make positive remarks about the position and your desire to assume more responsibilities.

- **What are your weaknesses?:** The best weaknesses are disguised strengths, such as, "I'm not happy when I'm not challenged by my work" instead of "I'm easily bored." Another good approach is to give an

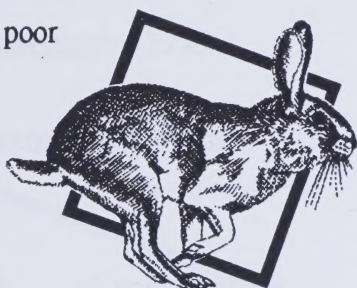


irrelevant weakness, such as, "I don't do this well, or I don't operate this kind of machine well"—something that won't be required of you in the position you're after.

- **How do you work with groups—are you a team player?:** Describe some of the team efforts you have been involved in and be sure to give credit to your coworkers for their contributions to the product.
- **Describe the work you do now:** Emphasize your importance or the importance of the work you do. Describe some of the more routine work as well, so that you make it known that you don't neglect details.

Most Common Reasons Why Applicants are Rejected After the Interview

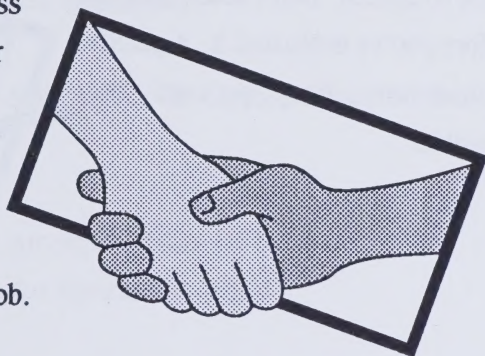
- Poor personal appearance.
- Overbearing, overaggressive, overconfident, conceited, superiority complex, know-it-all attitude.
- Inability to express self clearly, poor voice, diction, grammar.
- Lack of planning for a career, purpose, and goal(s).
- Lack of interest, enthusiasm; passive, indifferent attitude.
- Lack of confidence, poise; nervousness, ill-at-ease.
- Overemphasis on salary.
- Unwilling to start at the bottom, expects too much too soon.
- Makes excuses, evasive, hedges on unfavorable items in record.
- Lack of tact.



- Lack of maturity.
- Lack of courtesy; ill-mannered.
- Condemnation of past employers.
- Lack of social understanding.
- Lack of enthusiasm.
- Fails to look interviewer in the eye.
- Indecision.
- Sloppy application.
- Overelaboration of details of experience.
- Wants the job for only a short time.
- Little sense of humor.
- Lack of knowledge in field of specialization.
- Emphasis on people s/he knows.
- Unwilling to go where agency has a need.



- Cynical.
- Intolerant, strong prejudices.
- Narrow interests.
- Lack of appreciation of the value of experience.
- Late to interview without a good reason.
- Failure to express appreciation for interviewer's time.
- Asks no questions about the job.
- High-pressure type.
- Indefinite response to questions.



In summary, the employer is not doing you a favor if s/he offers you a job. Employers expect to profit by hiring you and that's why they are doing it. In other words, the employer is trying to find the answer to one simple question: **"What can you do for me?"** To force the employer to dig for that answer is ridiculous. To not know what you could do to help that employer solve his or her problem is tantamount to losing half the battle. To imply in any

way that you doubt your ability to do that work is to lose the other half. The people who succeed best in interviews do so for one of two basic reasons:

- They clearly have the skills to do the work.
- They project a feeling of confidence in their skills sufficient to overcome any perceived weaknesses on the part of the interviewer.

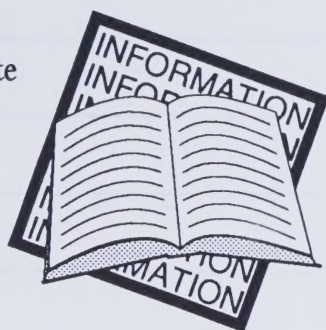
Dare to dream. Don't abandon a goal before you've evaluated it. A positive attitude can make almost anything possible!



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